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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 000218

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SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE AND THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR
EX-IM BANK OFFICIALS

REF: STATE 08652

1. Embassy warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for the visit of EX-IM Bank Officials Vasilios Aristomenis Giannopoulos, Senior Project Officer, Structured Finance Division and Michael Sams, Electrical Engineer, Engineering and Environment Division to visit Greece, January 23- February 1, 2005. EX-IM Bank Officials will evaluate the financial and management aspect of Heliiodomi and their prospects in the Greek renewable energy industry. Control Officer will be Cathleen Carothers, Economic Officer, Tel. (30) 210-720-2309, cell (30) 6948575525, FAX (30) 210-729-4312. Embassy receptionist Tel. (30) 210-720-2491. Point of contact in Thessaloniki will be the Acting Consul General Demitra Pappas, Tel. (30) 210-242-905, cell (30) 6944-390-186.

2. Embassy requests that Mr. Giannopoulos contact Ms. Carothers to arrange a debrief of the Athens/Thessaloniki visit.

3. Pursuant to State 66580 dated March 25, 2004, country clearance for any person on TDY for 30 days or more is granted contingent on completion of the mandatory personal security training. The Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) conducts the approved minimum four-day training class, "Serving Abroad for Families & Employees (S.A.F.E.)." This is the same course required for employees and highly recommended for their eligible family members over the age of 18.

4. It is important that all visitors carefully read the information and instructions provided below. Post wants to ensure the best possible service to all official visitors and will work closely to arrange details of each visit.

5. Early morning check-in: For those coming from Washington, D.C., often on the early morning Delta flight arriving at 1005, please note there is no guarantee of early check-in at the hotel. Normal check-in time is 1400. Although post can request early check-in for travelers, the only way to guarantee a room waiting is to reserve it for the preceding night. Travelers who wish to book the previous night must request post to make this reservation. The traveler is responsible for this expense. Travelers should be prepared to go from the airport directly to the office/meetings if they have not paid for a room the night before. The Embassy has a cafeteria that serves breakfast and lunch.

6. Arrivals: We expect to be able to provide transportation for official visitors at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level and above upon arrival at the airport. Other visitors should plan to use taxis. The price of a taxi from Athens airport to downtown is approximately 28 - 30 euros. Depending on traffic, the trip to the Embassy takes 40 to 60 minutes.

7. Documents required: Diplomatic and official passport holders must have Greek diplomatic visas, a valid Schengen visa or diplomatic ID from any other Schengen country, in addition to their passport, in order to enter Greece. The Embassy will be unable to obtain plane-side visas for USG employees arriving in Greece without proper documentation. Holders of tourist passports do not/not require visas. USG employees who plan to operate a motor vehicle while in Greece must be in possession of a valid U.S. drivers' license as well as a valid International Drivers' License and must carry proof of third party liability insurance while operating the vehicle.

8. Embassy access: Embassy Athens has installed a new identification badging system, which requires that all Department of State employees bring their Global ID and/or Smart Card that will be acknowledged as proper Embassy ID. DOS employees will be expected to stop by the RSO Office to program their ID to be compatible with the Athens system.

9. Regional Medical Office: The Health Unit at the Embassy is fully staffed. A State Department medical clearance is required by all employees of agencies participating in ICASS who will be traveling TDY for more than 60 days a year. Health Unit access is not guaranteed without this clearance. Family members will not have access to the Health Unit unless they are on employees' travel orders. We strongly recommend that TDYers bring with them proof of current medical insurance coverage and medevac coverage if obtained.

10. Currency: Greece is a member of the European Monetary Union, and the Euro is the currency of the country. Accommodation exchange is available.

11. Office space/laptops/mobile phones: Office space in both classified and unclassified areas is extremely limited. For those employees planning on bringing laptops and modems to use in their hotel.

12. Presidential Directive - Trafficking in Persons: All TDY personnel are reminded that President Bush has signed a National Security Presidential Directive on Trafficking in Persons.

13. Security information:

A. Embassy Athens is designated "critical" for indigenous terrorism. In the past, local Greek terrorist groups have targeted prominent Greek officials.

B. Over the past year the U.S. Embassy has experienced numerous bomb threats, protest marches, and anti-U.S. demonstrations. These protests are generally peaceful.

C. Crime is rated "medium" in Greece. For TDY visitors, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are the most common crimes. Taxis are generally safe.

D. Traffic in Greek urban areas, especially Athens and Thessaloniki, is chaotic. Greece leads the European Union in traffic fatalities. Road conditions are generally poor.

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